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POTTER VALLEY
CONSERVATION PLAN
MENDOCINO COUNTY

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	<u>Page</u>
Location and Physical Description	1
Relation of the Plan to the California Environmental Quality Act	2
OBJECTIVES AND POLICY	
Community Involvement	5
POTTER VALLEY POLICY CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS	6
CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT	7
DESCRIPTION OF THE POTTER VALLEY CONSERVATION PLAN	
Introduction	16
Population and the Economy	16
Principles for Conservation Planning	18
Implementation Measures	21
Guest Speaker Program	23
Planning Staff	24

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INTRODUCTION

LOCATION AND PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Potter Valley is located 130 miles north of San Francisco and approximately 15 miles north and east of Ukiah, the County seat. It is separated from nearby Redwood Valley and Highway 101 to the west by a high range of hills. Access into Potter Valley is by way of Potter Valley Road which winds north along the East Fork of the Russian River from State Route 20. In the Valley, Eel River Road winds northward through the hills to the larger Eel River and recreation areas. The East Fork of the Russian River begins at the northern end of the Valley and flows to the south. It is fed by the many streams which rise in the surrounding hills. The Valley is approximately seven miles from north to south and two to three miles from east to west. The Planning Area includes the surrounding hills as well as the Valley itself.

Potter Valley has most of the highest quality soil in the County and abundant irrigation water piped through the northern hills from the Eel River in a combination power production and irrigation project. Water is distributed through two major canals, one down each side of the Valley. It is one of California's most productive small, inland, agricultural valleys. Pear orchard and varietal wine vineyards are major crops at the present time. Livestock production and small truck farms also flourish on the valley floor. The surrounding hills are used for grazing by herds of beef cattle and sheep.

The small village of Potter Valley contains a school and the few stores which provide community services to the public.

RELATION OF THE PLAN TO THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

The Potter Valley General Plan Advisory Committee studied its environment and realistically appraised the Valley's potential.

The Committee recognized that the development pressures which have occurred will continue because of the Valley's attractive character and its accessibility from Ukiah. However, the agricultural and the rural qualities of the Valley are essential objectives of the planning program. Thus all major pressures for development must be resisted and any development which does occur in the Valley must not be allowed where it would disrupt or intrude on agriculture.

As yet, most development has resulted primarily from scattered parcel splitting rather than from any major subdivisions. However, if it continues, this kind of rural non-farm development can conflict with, and be disruptive to agriculture in many ways. Thus it was decided by the Committee that this type of development should be discouraged and policies are needed which would ensure that the land will remain in large farm-size parcels. The Committee also addressed the concept of preserving and enhancing the natural environment and recognized that the hilly range lands which contribute so much to the character of the Valley must also be protected.

The Committee's policy statement is an inherent part of this Conservation Plan and serves as an invaluable guide to the kinds of realistic planning decisions needed for the future protection of Potter Valley. Thus it can be affirmed that the Potter Valley Plan expressed the spirit of the Environmental Quality Act and is a good example of its practical application to a rural area.

In compliance with Section 15148 of the California Administrative Code this plan document also serves as the Environmental Impact Report for the Potter Valley Conservation Plan. The required elements of an Environmental Impact Report are listed below, followed by the section of the plan document in which they are addressed.

1. Description of the Project - Description of the Plan, pages 16, 17, and General Plan Map.
2. Description of Environmental Setting - Introduction, page 1.
3. Environmental Impact of the Proposed Action - Principles for Conservation Planning, pages 18-22.
4. Adverse Environmental Effects which Cannot be Avoided if the Proposal is Implemented - Principles for Conservation Planning, pages 18-22. Since this is a "conservation and preservation oriented Plan, rather than one of major development, adverse effects are absolutely minimal."
5. Mitigation Measures Proposed to Minimize the Impact-Policy Conference Reports, pages 7-15.
6. Alternatives to the Proposed Action - There are no viable alternatives for the relatively remote and lightly populated planning area which are acceptable to the residents of to C.E.Q.A.
7. Relationship Between Local Short-Term Use of Man's Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-Term Productivity - Principles for Conservation Planning, pages 18-22.

8. Irreversible Environmental Changes which would be Involved in the Proposed Action Should it be Implemented - Principles for Conservation Planning, pages 18-22. See particularly policies aimed at preservation of agriculture rather than change, page 18.
9. Growth-Inducing Impact of the Proposed Action - Growth, page 16.
10. Organizations and Persons Consulted - Guest Speaker Program, page 24.

The following section of this report includes the careful and thorough reports of the four policy conference subcommittees which document the concern for, and understanding of, the need for environmentally based planning in Potter Valley.

OBJECTIVES AND POLICY

COMMUNITY INVOLVMENT

After many months of preliminary study, the Potter Valley General Plan Advisory Committee invited other interested citizens to join in an all day Policy Conference. At this Conference and later review meetings the policy statement was finally formulated and adopted. The work throughout was thorough and careful and all those who participated are congratulated for their patient and willing work.

The study guide for the Conference contained several subjects for which it was necessary to set policy. Sub-committees were formed to study each subject and set tentative policies for later review by the Conference as a whole. Needless to say, there was much overlap in the sub-committee discussions since decisions in one subject area usually involved considerations of one or more other areas. As the subjects were reviewed by the Conference as a whole, understanding was developed of the inter-relationships of the various policies and plan elements. The full report is included in the following pages.

POTTER VALLEY POLICY CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

Discussion Group Topic: Services

*Joe Wheeler
Anon Forrest
Nick Berry
Hugh Tadlock
*Ray Van Beek
Chet Linser
*Glen Vaughn

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Discussion Group Topic: The Natural Environment, Resources and Related Industries

G. Marchbein
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*Steve Thornton
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Jim McAsey
*Charles Guntley

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Discussion Group Topic: Housing

*George E. Enderby
William S. Mathews
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Discussion Group Topic: Growth, Change and Potential for new Development

Jerry Fox
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* Members of the Potter Valley General Plan Advisory Committee

POTTER VALLEY GENERAL PLAN CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

POLICY CONFERENCE REPORT

December 7, 1974

REVISED August 1975

This report is divided broadly into four categories: Services, Housing Growth, Change and Potential for New Development, and the Natural Environment, Resources and Related Industries.

Services

1. Water District - Property divisions within the water district should be required to provide easement to the irrigation sources in the same way as road easements are now required.
2. Drainage - As the problems of adequate drainage in the valley are as important as the accessibility of water it is recommended to direct whatever existing appropriate agency to study the problems of winter drainage in Potter Valley and to make recommendations to solve these problems. The existing drainage ditches need to be regularly and periodically unplugged to prevent flooding. The responsibility and expense of this operation could possibly be borne by a flood control district.
3. Schools & Recreation - Potter Valley now has adequate land for its schools. However, additional land should be purchased for expansion in the foreseeable future. It is recommended to advise the school district to purchase adequate acreage for future growth and suggested that this purchase and expansion be directed toward the south end of the existing school. The adequacy and accessibility of water should also be considered in the purchase.

The Committee recommends that the school district not sell any of its existing holdings South of Main Street.

4. Park/School Combining District. It is possible that the school land be combined with a community park in a combining district, the idea being that parks and recreation could be offered by the school curriculum. The park/school district would be tax funded but would have the advantage of being a concrete display of tax funds and a total community benefit. Additional benefit would be derived by emphasizing the Potter Valley education facilities as learning centers, the object being to draw adults back to the educational process. It is recommended to encourage the multiple use of public school land and facilities and to explore the possible sources of funding.
5. Fire District - It is recommended that there be identification of subdivision roads to aid in the efforts of fire control. All new developments are directed to recognize this need and also the necessity for year-round road base to provide winter access for the fire department. An auxiliary source of water should be provided by the developer to supplement the fire department's supply. This would eliminate much of the need to drive back and forth to replenish the water truck's supply.
6. Sewage & Water - In view of current and developing water sewage problems, Potter Valley needs to consider a water sewage system before further growth is encouraged. It is recommended that study be initiated of sewage disposal needs for the Centerville area of the valley. It is also recommended that study be initiated on water systems with the same center-valley emphasis.

7. Resident Deputy - The resident deputy sheriff service to the Potter Valley community should be considered the minimal acceptable level of the service and as such, it is recommended to maintain at least this level.
8. Road Maintenance - We recommend that an up-to-date and accurate map be drawn for the purpose of standardizing the maintenance of the roads that are existing in Potter Valley and that site map should be presented to the Board of Supervisors for adoption.
9. Commercial Recommendation - Potter Valley encourages the development of private commercial services which are in keeping with the agricultural nature of the community.

Recommendations of the Natural Environment Committee:

1. We strongly recommend the preservation of prime agricultural ground on the valley floor, all tillable soils, conservation classifications I, II, III & IV.
2. Land in agricultural preserves should be maintained in that status, including rangelands.
3. On divisions of land 40 acres and under, seller must guarantee acceptable standards of water, consistent with the land use.
4. Divisions of land should be considered with reference to building and road sites. No building sites on more than a 30% grade or upon land which has slippage problems without special arrangements to counter this problem. No roads in position to cause severe erosion.

5. The committee discussed the idea of transfer of development rights as separate from land transfers giving both the advantages and disadvantages.
6. We wish to conserve areas of natural resources including timber lands and mineral deposits as well as prime agricultural soils. Timber should be taxed when cut only (severance tax). In general, we wish to preserve and to protect what timber we have.
7. We wish to see good conservation practices including controlled burning under proper conditions, in such a manner as to protect wildlife habitats as well as promote the natural flora and fauna
8. Conserve land suitable for range land in suitable acreages.
9. Take all measures to insure good water, a) for domestic purposes, b) for agricultural water in the irrigation district. The diversion from the Eel River is necessary for continuance of agriculture in the valley. General Policy Statement - This committee is greatly concerned with maintaining high water quality.
10. Need a sewer district in areas of concentrated residential housing, that is, the downtown area. Also, a downtown plan is needed. The Committee felt that there is need for a good downtown plan in the Centerville district, roughly along Main Street from Powerhouse to Eel River Road. There could also be formed an architectural committee to follow the old look, simple "Victorian" charm. Along with the proposal for downtown study, a sewage and water system should be considered for that area.

There could be a residential and commercial mix as long as rural architectural characteristics were followed.

11. Recommend keeping prime agricultural land on the valley floor area in larger acreages with a 40 acre minimum. Create buffer zones around the areas of prime agricultural uses so that the normal agricultural process cannot be curtailed as a result of residential pressure. The noises and practices associated with normal agriculture uses must be considered acceptable by those who plan to live nearby.
12. The committee recommends that the good part of the burden of buffer zones needs to be laid largely on the developer and less on agriculture or industry. That is, lay the burden on the intruding use.
13. Concentrated commercial and residential uses should be confined to our Centerville district to prevent strip development. Encourage agriculturally related commerce and industry in particular. As an example, a cheese factory, pear packing shed, fruit drying operation, and so on would be related commercial endeavor.
14. In general, this committee wishes to encourage recreational uses that are compatible with rangeland and agriculture. Develop Russian River County park to include more parking areas but limit to day use in all areas. The committee recommends the area of the Eel River for a quarter mile along the river on both sides of the bridge be considered for recreational area if not already in other specific usage.

15. East Side Road should be considered the main artery road and should receive prime maintenance. The bridge near town and "Eddie's Curve" should be straightened. West Road and perhaps other similar valley roads should be widened enough for safety of pedestrians in spots where this is indicated. Pedestrian trails should be planned for both East and West Side Roads. No new roads need to be considered at this time.
16. While we wish to preserve the beauty of our roadsides, we want local approval before putting any road into scenic highway designation, due to the set back restrictions involved.

Housing:

1. Regarding the area along the Eel River from the County line northward to the Ascherman Ranch, the committee recommends variable lot size based on developmental constraints, environmental, health, and other applicable standards which shall be determined by further study by the Planning Department and the Citizens Advisory Committee when development is proposed. The basic zone used for this area would be Upland Recreation (U-R).
2. Regarding cluster development, the committee felt that cluster development should be permitted where multiples of the base zone exist, in single ownership and not to exceed four units.
3. Any condemned dwelling shall be abated or brought up to code within a reasonable period of time not to exceed six months.

4. Mobile Homes: The need for housing in Potter Valley is recognized. However, this need will always be considered relative to its impact on agriculture, the stated primary industry of the valley.

Because mobile homes are considered vehicles (personal property), rather than real property, they are taxed differently from the land on which they are mounted. The State collects a fee based on 2 percent of the estimated retail market value computed over a 17 year period with rapid depreciation over the first few years. Approximately 3 percent of this fee is deducted by the State and the balance returned to the County. The fee returning from the State from a Potter Valley based mobile home is divided equally between the County general fund and the County local school district. In Potter Valley's case this means that mobile homes do not contribute to roads, school bonds, junior college bonds, Ukiah High lease purchase, Potter Valley cemetery, or Potter Valley Community Services.

This tax inequity results in an unfair tax burden being placed on the owners of real property.

Therefore, future mobile home sitings in Potter Valley will be limited in placement. However, replacement or upgrading of existing mobile homes will be permitted. New placement will be limited to agricultural and industrial labor housing which would be subject to inspections and regulations, and which would be associated with a tax generating base.

5. Regarding the Uniform Building Codes, everyone should be treated equally but if the codes are too strict, they should be changed through legal means and applied to all. Building and health code regulations should be uniformly applied to all construction. Exceptions to present code standards, such as pier foundations, use of lower-grade or re-used lumber, and other less expensive means of construction may be acceptable but any changes in the code should be applicable to all.
6. Regarding the need for housing, the committee wanted to clearly state that Potter Valley is an agricultural community and is not a "bedroom community" for Ukiah.

Growth & Change:

1. Potter Valley has grown more so than the rest of the County. People are moving out from the Ukiah valley. The area is unfortunately becoming a "bedroom community" for Ukiah. Retirement people are coming and there are two types: one type that would move into a one acre parcel and not work, the other type are interested in agriculture. Both have limited income. The committee wishes to preserve the intensive agriculture of the area and regarding incoming people, would encourage truck gardens
2. The committee recommends building the reputation of the agricultural industry in Potter Valley, even to the extent of designating a copyrighted slogan such as "Potter Valley Products".

3. The committee feels the growth should be deliberate and should be placed where it is most compatible with the agricultural characteristics of the area. Growth should be allowed but controlled and put in the right location. Potter Valley has 75% of the County's prime soils.
4. The committee recommended that there be no more lot splits on the valley floor, that there should be a minimum of 40 acres for parcel size on the valley floor and that non-related or non-agricultural type industry should be discouraged. That development be from the town center was considered a fairly good idea as long as there would not be pressure on the agricultural base of the valley. There was some interest in the transfer of development rights concept. Transfer could possibly occur from the exclusive agricultural areas where it would not be wise to build to selected suitable less valuable areas. In other words, protect the agricultural areas by transferring development rights from those areas into other areas where housing would be more suitable and less of an intrusion on the agriculture.
5. The committee also briefly discussed incorporation in a concept of a zoning and planning district. A great deal of discussion was on the Farmers Market concept previously noted when speaking of the concept of "Potter Valley Products". Basically, the committee is interested in slow growth and how to inhibit further lot splits.

DESCRIPTION OF THE POTTER VALLEY CONSERVATION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The preceding policy statement is the essence of the Conservation Plan. It provides the basis for the graphic Plan described here and the foundation for the Plan's preservation and conservation orientation. The Plan, including the statement, is intended to preserve agriculture and encourage its expansion; and, conversely, it is intended to discourage any more scattered urban or rural non-farm development in the Valley's fertile and productive environment. However, it is not exclusionary since it does provide for modest expansion in the Potter Valley area. The primary goal of the Plan is the preservation of Potter Valley's prime agricultural land in economic-sized units. This goal will not necessarily preclude development of existing smaller parcels.

POPULATION AND THE ECONOMY

Growth

Potter Valley Planning area contains approximately 1,000 people living in about 300 dwelling units. In recent years, Valley population has grown slightly faster than the County as a whole and most newcomers are non-farm residents who work in Ukiah or elsewhere nearby. Some of the hills have been split into 20 and 40 acre parcels to accommodate the attraction this area has for young people desiring to leave urban areas and lead a new rural existence.

It is difficult to estimate with any assurance the future growth rate for an area as small and as rural as Potter Valley. Many unforeseeable external factors could influence development within the

next decade. Nevertheless, implementation of the policy and plan to preserve agriculture will insure a continued slow growth rate. Current State and County growth trends indicate that a great influx of population is not expected.

A three to five percent growth rate would result in about 15 homes per year for the next decade. This is considered a high estimate, and the rate will be somewhat lower if the conservation policy is firmly implemented. Furthermore, this class of development if the Plan is followed, could be accommodated without disrupting agriculture.

The Economy

The Policy Statement contained in this report, calls for preservation of agricultural land and timber which are the traditional resources providing the economic base for Potter Valley. The timber resources are generally outside the Planning Area but residents in the Valley work in the mill in the north part of the Planning Area on the Eel River and elsewhere in the forests. There is a pallet manufacturer in the Valley who provides limited employment.

The Plan encourages agriculturally related activities such as cheese manufacturing and fruit packing and processing. No specific areas are shown on the Plan for these operations since many locations would be equally suitable. Principles for location are discussed in the following section.

PRINCIPLES FOR CONSERVATION PLANNING

Agriculture

Most of the Valley is shown in the agricultural category with a 40 acre minimum parcel size. This is an expression of the basic policy to protect agriculture. The Plan indicates the location of major concentrations of smaller parcels on the Valley floor thus recognizing these as small truck farms or vineyard areas with some scattered non-farm homes interspersed. Even in these areas, however, the intent is to preclude additional parcel splitting and confine additional non-farm housing to existing small parcels. The hill areas are designated for rangeland and additional parcel splitting also would be severely limited or eliminated. The intent would be to preserve the land in parcels of a size economic for grazing.

Ranchers and County government need to support and implement this policy through zoning revisions in the near future.

A large portion of the Planning Area, both in the Valley and on the hills, is now in an agricultural preserve as provided for by the Williamson Act and County legislation. The Plan should encourage further use of the Williamson Act in Potter Valley. Future revisions of the existing law may make it more advantageous for small holdings to be placed in this category. In any case, several owners of 20, 40, or 80 acre parcels can now qualify jointly for the benefits of the Act; however, this becomes progressively more difficult to do if 10 acre and smaller parcels containing non-agricultural uses are interspersed among the larger parcels. This further supports the policy to preclude additional parcel splits on the Valley floor.

Expansion of the Village Area

The existing service center is shown as a mixed commercial and residential area. This center contains the school, which also serves as a community center for the Valley. Within the area designated on the Plan, all the needed services and businesses, which will gradually come to Potter Valley can be readily accommodated.

A small area for possible commercial use is shown at Eel River Road. This is based on existing uses and the need to provide for necessary services for recreation-bound traffic heading to the Eel River. It is important that no additional area along any highway in Potter Valley be committed to commercial use.

Around the core area, some land for residential expansion is designated. This would be for the expansion of the small lot, village type of development which now exists. This expansion needs to be limited to the land area shown and particularly should not be extended out along the highways. One basic reason for providing for a close-in, compact, village development is that the needed services can be provided efficiently. This cannot be done if development is scattered or strung out along the highways.

Other Physical Limitations on Development

The Potter Valley Planning Area has some areas that are subject to flooding. Obviously, no development should occur in such areas. These areas, which are along the southern portion of the East Fork of the River, are shown as agricultural use.

At some future date, some limited and clustered development could be appropriate at some locations in the hills. Steep slopes need to be protected from erosion and scarring by cuts for roads or building sites must be avoided. In general, land over 30 percent slope should not be developed and all development should be subject to design review. This would preserve the scenic backdrop which is so essential to the present character of Potter Valley.

Lack of year-round water supply also may limit development. The plan recommends that no new parcel less than forty acres in area be created without a guaranteed supply of water.

Agribusiness

Specific locations are not shown for future agribusiness enterprises since several options are equally acceptable for the type of businesses which have a potential and which the policy statement finds would be desirable. Fruit packing might well occur on individual ranches close to orchards. As long as a grower is packing only his own produce, or occasionally a neighbor's crop as well, his operation would clearly be incidental to his agricultural occupation and would not assume the characteristics of an industry. This would not be disruptive to agriculture and could be permitted. A plant which processed for many growers would be industrial in nature and should not be permitted to intrude into an agricultural area. Packing and processing could be combined with a retail operation. Potter Valley products could be featured in an attractive farmer's market setting. In this case, the operation should be reasonably close to The Village. All proposals for agribusinesses should be carefully

reviewed for immediate and potential effects on the Valley environment. High standards of design construction and operation should be required.

Circulation

Eastside Road is shown as the main access road. Westside Road will continue as a major road and will carry considerable traffic. Both should be maintained as good two-lane highways. Any sort of strip development (residential or commercial) along these roads would require multiple access resulting in increased turning movements and undue traffic generation which could reduce the utility of these major access roads; it should be avoided completely. Cross-valley connections were considered and rejected as unnecessary.

Hiking and riding trails are shown along both the major roads. These are particularly needed close to The Village. Minor improvements are needed to make walking safer, particularly for children going to school. The pedestrian improvements might include facilities for bicycle traffic as well.

Protection of Scenic Qualities

All discussions in Potter Valley and the resultant Policy Statement emphasize the importance of protecting the unique valley environment and its scenic qualities. Protection of the hills which form the background and give the sense of "place" to Potter Valley has already been mentioned. Equally important is the protection of the closer view along the roads. This is the most visible part of any environment and therefore the most personal visual experience.

Although it would be quite inappropriate to control the design of new residences, it is true that more rustic styles fit better into a rural environment. As a principle, signs and billboards should be prohibited and unsightly derelict buildings should be removed wherever they exist. Potter Valley Road, the beautiful drive along the East Fork of the Russian River, should be preserved and enhanced further. The County Park along the road should be expanded whenever additional strips of land are available. Facilities should be limited to those necessary for day use only; they should be well constructed but unobtrusive so as to preserve their scenic qualities. The development principles are included in the Plan and will protect the scenic qualities of Potter Valley into the future.

Schools Recreation and Services

The Plan shows the existing school site expanded to the south to provide for future needs. The site contains sufficient area for recreation and park use as well. This area, along the East Fork of the Russian River, could be developed as a natural recreation area to complement the active recreation/education facility. Multiple use of school facilities for recreation and education and the possibility of forming a joint district was recommended as a policy and should be explored in the near future.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

The primary tool for implementation of the Potter Valley Plan will be through zoning. The County ordinance will be revised within the next several months to make the law more responsive to local needs

and present conditions. The County will work closely with the local General Plan Advisory Committees in applying the new ordinance to the various sections of the County.

Additional measures for implementation will be carried out through service districts. The Potter Valley Committee recommended that studies be made to determine the implications of a joint recreation and education district, and improvements in the fire district. These studies should be undertaken as soon as possible. Finally, sewage and domestic water supply studies are definitely needed for the Village area. Within the next few months the County will prepare a Scenic Highways Element as a part of the County-wide General Plan. This will contain standards and principles to help the County preserve the unique scenic heritage of Potter Valley and all of Mendocino County.

GUEST SPEAKER PROGRAM

William Beatty, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service.

Don Uhr, Chief, County Building Inspector

William Brooks, Farm Advisor

Rod Shippey, Livestock Advisor

Arthur Kramer, County Department of Parks and Beaches

Susan Plummer, North Coast Opportunities, Social Planning Unit

Jerry Davis, County Health Department, Division of Environmental Health

Ed Belliston, County Department of Public Works

Anon Forrest, United Stand

PLANNING STAFF

Ronald F. Hall, Planning Director

Philip Gorny, Project Coordinator

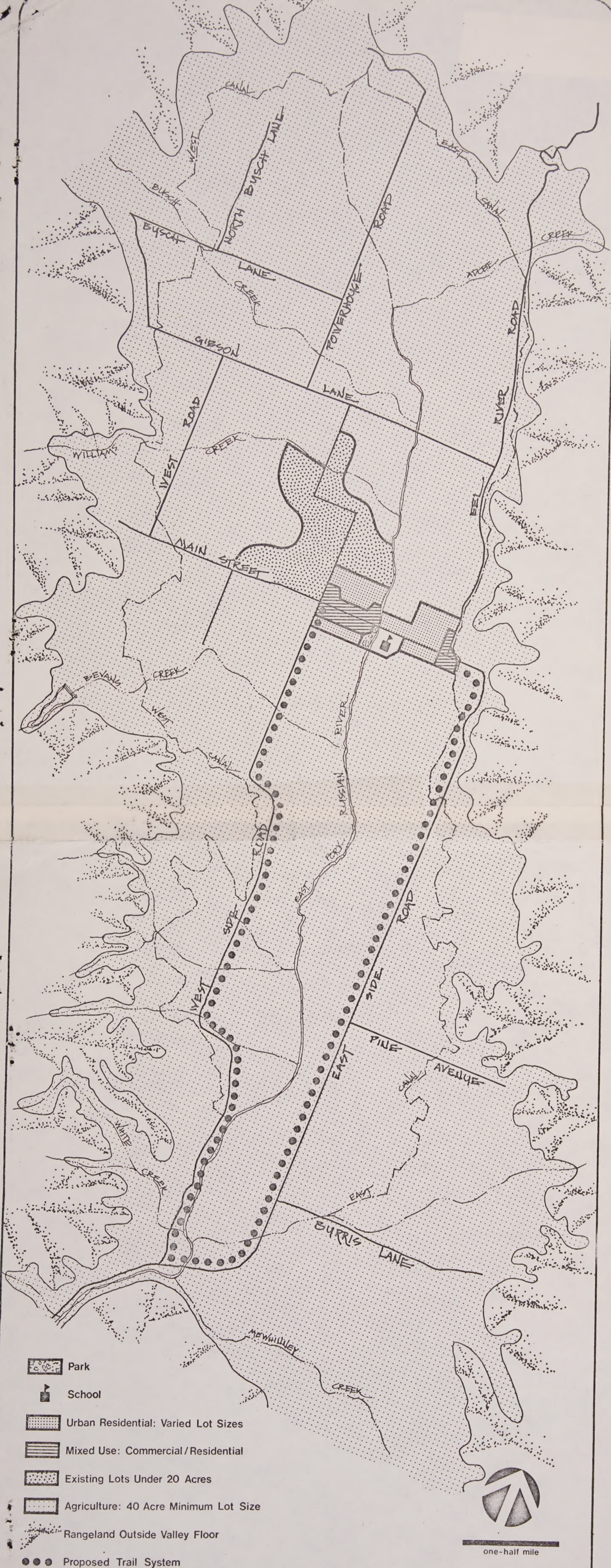
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







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Michael Zinke, Draftsperson



-  Park
-  School
-  Urban Residential: Varied Lot Sizes
-  Mixed Use: Commercial/Residential
-  Existing Lots Under 20 Acres
-  Agriculture: 40 Acre Minimum Lot Size
-  Rangeland Outside Valley Floor
-  Proposed Trail System



POTTER VALLEY PLAN

Mendocino County
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